

The Early Weeks

- Taking care of yourself
- Your milk supply
- Baby's growth spurts



Taking care of yourself

During these early weeks you and your baby are adjusting to new things. Taking good care of yourself helps you take good care of your baby.

- Ask for help with household tasks.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods.
- Drink water or juice.
- Take one or two naps a day, sleeping whenever the baby sleeps.

Make a comfortable, quiet place to breastfeed and enjoy your baby. Have plenty of pillows, a place to prop your feet, and something to eat or drink. Put toys or books for older children nearby. You may want to take the phone off the hook or listen to relaxing music. Take time to breathe slowly and deeply.



Making breast milk - How it works

Breast size does not affect your ability to make milk. As your baby grows inside you, your body prepares to nourish your baby. Your breasts get larger and begin to make colostrum, the first milk. Colostrum helps protect your baby from illness. It comes in small amounts so your baby can adjust to this new way of being fed.

Three to four days after birth, your milk becomes more plentiful. Your breasts become full. This fullness goes away during the second week. Your body is adjusting to making milk. Ensure a good milk supply by holding and latching your baby on correctly and breastfeeding 8 to 12 times in 24 hours.

Milk “let down”

After your baby breastfeeds a few minutes, your milk will “let down” (begin to flow). You can hear a soft “ka, ka” sound as your baby swallows. You may notice a tingly feeling in your breast or milk may leak from your other breast. Breast pads can keep you dry and comfortable.

Is my breast milk OK?

It's the best! You can even breastfeed during most illnesses. Your body's ability to fight germs passes to your baby in your milk and helps keep your baby healthy. Breastfeeding mothers can take most medications but always check with your health care provider.

Most babies are not bothered by what their mothers eat. A few babies are fussy if their mothers eat too much of one food. Eat a variety of foods, and drink a variety of liquids.

Signs of enough milk

In the beginning of the feeding, as the milk lets down, babies swallow after almost every suck. Gradually their sucking and swallowing slow down. Sometimes babies rest a while, then start again. Toward the end of the feeding the milk has more calories, helping baby gain well. As babies feel full they let go of the breast. Babies usually breastfeed 10 to 20 minutes on each breast.

Your baby should

- breastfeed 8 to 12 times in 24 hours,
- swallow often after your milk lets down,
- (after day five) have six or more wet diapers in 24 hours, and
- three or more soft, yellow stools in 24 hours. After six weeks, breastfed babies usually have larger stools less often.

Breastfeeding diary

Until your baby is gaining well, keep a diary. During each 24 hours, check off the wet diapers and stools your baby has, and write down when your baby breastfeeds.

Diapers

Wet											
Stools											

After day 5, at least 6 wet diapers and 3 stools in 24 hours.

Feeding Times

Eight to twelve feedings in 24 hours.

Seek help if your baby does not have enough wet diapers and stools.

Bottles and Pacifiers

It may take a little practice for breastfeeding to go smoothly. During these early weeks, avoid giving your baby bottles or pacifiers. A baby sucks differently on a bottle or pacifier nipple and may become confused. Bottles and pacifiers can keep you from making enough milk.



Your milk supply

You can make all the milk your baby needs. Breastfeed whenever your baby seems hungry or needs comfort. As your baby breastfeeds your body gets the message to make more milk. The more your baby breastfeeds, the more milk your body makes.

Fussy babies and growth spurts

Sometimes babies can be fussy. Babies cry for many reasons and need someone to gently rock and comfort them. Try breastfeeding your baby more often or a little longer. The closeness and some breast milk may calm your baby.

Your baby may be going through a “growth spurt,” a time when babies are growing quickly and need extra milk. Go along with your baby’s need to breastfeed more often. After a day or two, your supply will build up to meet your baby’s needs.

These growth spurts usually happen around two weeks, six weeks, three months, and six months. If breastfeeding does not calm your baby, change your baby’s diaper, sing a song, walk outside, or carry your baby in a baby carrier. These early weeks are a learning time for everyone. Babies learn to trust that you will help them when they cry.



Breastfeeding around other people

At first, you may feel more comfortable breastfeeding your baby in a familiar place with just a friend or relative nearby. As you become more experienced you will feel confident breastfeeding in a variety of situations. It is easy to go places with a breastfed baby. All you need is an extra diaper. Wear a loose, stretchy top that pulls up easily.

Breastfeed when your baby first seems hungry. A baby blanket can cover your breast and baby.

Who to call for help

In these early weeks, you and your baby are learning how to breastfeed. New mothers need encouragement and someone to answer their questions. Call a friend or relative who enjoyed breastfeeding, or a lactation consultant, health care provider, hospital nursery, WIC breastfeeding specialist, or La Leche League.

Distributed by:

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1-877-WIC-KIDS

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Department of Public Health

5/97

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